

Senate Democrats, on the other hand, have released a farm bill proposal that maintains a bipartisan coalition and invests in all of the areas I mention. So I commend Chair STABENOW for her work.

Let me be clear: A purely partisan farm bill that departs from the long-standing spirit of bipartisanship has no future in the Senate. And, unfortunately, I might add, it seems to be where this House—the Republican House leadership and party—always goes. They always retreat to a corner of partisanship. They are not interested in improving the lives of American people. They are just interested in scoring political points to a narrow group back home, the MAGA group that seems to have such power in the party.

So I hope that doesn't happen on the farm bill. It has always been bipartisan. House Republicans, come on. Wake up. Do you want to help our farmers? Work together with Democrats and pass a bipartisan bill.

RIGHT TO CONTRACEPTION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on contraceptives, yesterday, we began the process for the Senate to consider the Right to Contraception Act led by Senators MARKEY and HIRONO in June.

Now, more than ever, contraception is a critical piece of protecting women's reproductive freedoms, standing as nothing short of a vital lifeline for millions of American women across the country.

Senate Democrats are committed to restoring women's freedoms and will fight to protect access to contraception and other reproductive freedoms that are essential safeguards for millions of women to control their own lives, their futures, and their bodies.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

RUSSIA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, just days after President Orbán rolled out the red carpet in Budapest for President Xi, the Chinese dictator rolled out a red carpet in Beijing for Vladimir Putin. The "friendship without limits" struck between America's

greatest strategic adversaries will now endure "for generations to come." And it appears to be rooted in a shared myth about the nature of world conflicts and a victim complex that would be laughable if it didn't carry such grave consequences for Western peace and security.

At last week's summit, Russia and China together accused the United States of threatening the world's strategic balance, as if it is Washington rather than Beijing or Moscow trying to redraw borders by force or to disrupt global order.

Well, if you are looking for the government that has doubled its nuclear arsenal in 3 years, you will find it in Beijing, not Washington. In fact, Americans' own strategic deterrent continues to suffer from chronic neglect. And the Biden administration continues to submit defense budgets that fail to keep up with inflation, much less with the growing threat posed by the PRC.

And if you are looking for the regime recklessly developing an insanely provocative and destabilizing nuclear weapon to deploy in space, you will find that one in Moscow.

The world's leading authoritarians never seem to let the facts get in the way. But economic and military realities matter enormously to the future of fledgling democracies and developing nations who are vulnerable to their economic coercion and thuggish political intimidation.

The challenge to Western peace and security is not confined to the Taiwan Straits and the trenches of Ukraine. Chinese debt traps and Russian security forces are expanding malign influence from Central America to Central Asia to Africa and to our own Western Hemisphere.

Russia's efforts to strangle democracy and wrestle free societies back under its control are perhaps most glaring along the borders of Europe.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the unshackled nations have largely chosen freedom and worked to build democratic governments and societies oriented squarely to the West. And the neo-Soviet imperialists in the Kremlin see that as a threat.

Leaders in Washington are prone to forget how fragile our own experiment in democracy was during its earliest days and how precious are the safeguards our Founders enshrined in our government to protect the minority from the excesses of authoritarianism of majority rule.

Sometimes, of course, politicians in Washington even flirt with the idea of tearing down these safeguards of democracies to deny the minority any meaningful power.

Fortunately, there is still a bipartisan firewall in the Senate against this sort of shortsighted radicalism. But for nascent, vulnerable democracies, such safeguards face even graver threats. And in Georgia, a parliamentary majority's quest for power

is threatening to suffocate the nation's civil society and unravel the guardrails of its democracy.

In an attempt to consolidate its hold on government, the Georgian Dream Party would stamp out the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the Georgian people.

And while the political opposition is large, it is chronically divided against itself. Despite their feckless party leaders, thousands of Georgians have taken to the streets to protest. Their desire for self-determination and freedom from Russian coercion is obvious. Four in five Georgians tell pollsters they want a distinctly European future.

They believe that planting themselves firmly in the West, among democratic nations where the rule of law prevails, is in their best interest.

Whether Georgia looks East or West matters to the United States. Standing with free people resisting the aggression of tyrants like Putin or Xi is in our own interests. This is true of Taiwan and Ukraine, Estonia, and Japan.

And it is true of Georgia. The Georgian people deserve the right to write their own future, not have it dictated to them by Moscow's preferred party chiefs.

And why is it that Russians obsess over controlling Georgia's future? It is about more than acting out Putin's neo-imperialist fantasy. Geography matters. For millennia, Georgia and its Black Sea coast stood at the crossroads of the civilized world. It is a key transit point for critical resources. And today, along with Armenia, it sits as a tantalizing link in the land bridge between authoritarian partners in Moscow and Tehran.

The people of Georgia have a long history of enduring conflict and conquest. They have a long tradition of resilience and a rich culture to be proud of. And they know there is a difference between bending to Russia and turning to the West.

So, like friends of the Georgian people across the West, I am hopeful this moment will be one which can take yet more pride, as a moment when the opposition to Russian coercion puts petty differences aside and stands united.

Of course, this must also be a moment for Georgia's ruling party to recognize the costs of ignoring their people's will in order to fulfill Putin's whims and to stop short of shredding their relationship with the West.

I hope those in power in Tbilisi will put sovereignty over subjugation and withdraw the coercive "Russia law" from parliament.

ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, last Thursday, the Biden administration announced its plan to sacrifice yet another source of affordable, reliable American energy on the altar of climate activism.

After years of freezes and bans on onshore and offshore oil and gas leasing,

the administration's latest attempt to appease Democrats' radical base is a ban on new coal leasing in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana.

This region is responsible for producing nearly half of the Nation's coal. Last year alone, the basin created more than 250 million tons of coal and employs more than 4,000 people. Shutting off development will result in lost jobs and millions of dollars of lost revenue for Montana and Wyoming.

The sting of the administration's War on Coal is one Kentuckians know all too well. And working families across the country are already struggling with persistent inflation. Energy prices alone have risen more than 40 percent since President Biden took office.

But Washington Democrats' radicalism may have finally stretched their own party to a breaking point. In fact, the Biden administration's war on affordable, reliable American energy has proven so radically harmful to consumers, workers, and our global competitiveness that it is facing bipartisan opposition right here in the Senate.

Just yesterday, a bipartisan majority passed Senator CRUZ's resolution disapproving of the Department of Energy's new rule to effectively ban affordable natural gas home furnaces.

This rule would significantly increase the existing efficiency standard and effectively ban the sale of more affordable home heating furnaces that don't meet it. By one estimate, this rule will heap as much as \$4 billion in new costs onto consumers who already can't afford the high cost of the Biden economy.

The American people have suffered enough, from Bidenomics to the Green New Deal. I am glad a majority of the Senate agrees it is time to slam the brakes on the administration's assault on gas appliances. And I am thankful to my colleague Senator CRUZ for bringing attention to this madness.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Angela M. Martinez, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 8369

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the State of Israel is facing the deadliest threat to its existence in a generation.

To its south, Israel is waging a war of survival against Hamas terrorists, who slaughtered 1,200 Israelis and abducted more than 250 men, women, and children. To its north, Hezbollah—the most armed terrorist organization in the world—is menacing Israeli towns and forcing tens of thousands to flee their homes. Just last month, Iran launched more than 300 ballistic missiles and attack drones at Israel—for the first time attacking the Jewish State from Iranian territory. Outlaw rebels and brigands in Yemen are also firing missiles and drones at Israeli and allied shipping, to include U.S. naval vessels.

As Israel is under siege at home, it is also under diplomatic assault abroad from Hamas's proxies at the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and even American college campuses.

Joe Biden's allies on Capitol Hill have grown increasingly hostile as well. The majority leader and the former Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, called for the removal of Binyamin Netanyahu from power. The majority leader said that Israel needs new elections. I think New York may need new elections.

Senator BERNIE SANDERS said we should not send "another nickel for Netanyahu," while Congresswoman ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ supports a bill that would strip the tax-exempt status of pro-Israel charities.

That is bad enough, but, unfortunately, instead of backing our Israeli friends to the hilt in this moment of maximum danger, the Biden administration has sanctioned Israelis, condemned its military, and second-guessed it, while trying to undermine its democratically elected leader.

Two weeks ago, Joe Biden went a step further, halting the shipment of bombs and precision-guided bomb kits that Israel needs to limit civilian casualties and destroy Hamas strongholds inside of Rafah and, for that matter, to free hostages, including American citizens.

The President also announced that he will withhold additional offensive weapons to Israel if Israel targets Hamas in Rafah, as if there were much difference between offensive and defensive weapons when Israel is surrounded on all sides by mortal enemies.

Joe Biden is instituting a de facto arms embargo on Israel that will save Hamas. The reason appears to be simple: He wants to appease a small minority of pro-Hamas voters in his own party in critical swing States he believes are necessary for his reelection.

That is why I have partnered with Congressman KEN CALVERT to pass the Israel Security Assistance Support Act, which would reverse Joe Biden's arms embargo on our ally. This legislation simply requires the prompt delivery of all weapons shipments approved by Congress. It also withholds pay from any Department of State or Defense bureaucrat who withholds vital military aid from Israel.

Earlier last week, the House did its part and passed the Israel Security Assistance Support Act with a bipartisan majority that included over a dozen Democrats. Now it is the Senate's turn.

Therefore, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 398, H.R. 8369. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. In my capacity as Senator from Vermont, I object.

Mr. COTTON. I regret that the Democrats will not allow this bill to come up for a vote, which, again, would simply ensure that aid that Congress has approved is delivered promptly to Israel in the middle of a shooting war of survival—a bill that, I would remind everyone, passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan majority.

The time is now to reverse Joe Biden's de facto arms embargo on Israel.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last month, President Biden announced yet another student loan giveaway. Among other things, this latest scheme would waive accrued and capitalized interest for certain borrowers and, staggeringly, provide significant loan forgiveness for three-quarters of a million borrowers with an average household income—get this—of \$312,976.

That is right. President Biden's latest reckless expenditure of taxpayer dollars would go, in part, to providing loan forgiveness to three-quarters of a million borrowers with an average household income above \$300,000.

All told, the President's latest student loan giveaway will cost nearly \$150 billion. That is on top of the \$475 billion in loan forgiveness the President announced last summer.

That scheme, which the administration dubbed the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan, will implement de facto loan forgiveness on a massive scale by creating a system in which the majority of future Federal borrowers will never fully repay their student loans.

The Department of Education estimated that borrowers with only undergraduate debt enrolled in the SAVE Program can, on average, expect to pay back just \$6,121 for each \$10,000 that they borrow. That amounts to the Federal Government taking on, on average, almost 40 percent of the cost of these borrowers' student loans.

There are so many problems with the President's plan it is difficult to even know where to begin.

First, there is the staggering cost of these and other Biden administration student loan programs. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget,